Hasina drops no hint of remorse

By Tamim Ahmed

BANGLADESH'S ousted premier, Sheikh Hasina's written interviews flaunt an utter lack of contrition. There is not a hint of remorse, not a sliver of guilt.

The interviews published by Indian outlets last week — *The Hindustan Times, New Indian Express* and *The Hindu* — or the ones by *Reuters, AFP* and the UK's *Independent* (published on October 29) show that former prime minister, in exile in India since August 5, 2024, remains thoroughly unencumbered by even a touch of introspection or self-doubt.

Going a step further, *The Week*, also based in India, published a column by Hasina where she deplores the ineptitude of the very institutions her regime had meticulously destroyed. She flails against the interim government for not having the people's mandate, which she had manufactured to stay in power for years through rigged elections. She berates the BNP for trying to manipulate the caretaker government system, which her regime had abolished. Her deluded sense of being wronged pervades the entire article.

The closest Hasina comes to acknowledging some error of her administration in the article is one that she had already mentioned in her written interviews. She writes, "I mourn the life of every Bangladeshi that has been needlessly lost since the protests in the summer of 2024. While the vast majority of law-enforcement officers acted within their guidelines, mistakes were very clearly made in the way some members of the security forces responded to the rapid upsurge of violence."

Hasina goes on to write that it was a very fluid and "febrile situation", and clearly there were "breakdowns of discipline within the chain of command".

She then states, "However, the Awami League categorically rejects the allegations that we were directly responsible for, or commanded the use of, lethal force against our own citizens. To characterise what happened as a plot by a democratically elected government to commit violence against its own people is entirely wrong. Indeed, I personally took steps to ensure that no firearms were used."

Throughout all her interviews Hasina maintains that the evidence against her, audio clips of phone calls, were either doctored or taken out of context. She also rejects the UN human rights office estimate that 1,400 people were killed during the July uprising as "inflated".

She told in her interview with *The Hindustan Times* rejecting her role in the crackdown, "But to suggest that I was directing minute-by-minute tactical responses from the prime minister's office is to fundamentally misunderstand how security forces work. I repeat, at no point did I authorise security forces to fire on crowds."

The Daily Star's own investigation found Hasina to have personally authorised the use of lethal weapons. This newspaper had reported on a phone recording from July 18, 2024 where Hasina tells her nephew, former Dhaka South Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, "I have given instructions, now I have given direct instructions; now they will use lethal weapons. Wherever they find them [protesters], they will shoot directly."

The 78-year-old former leader took the opportunity to express her gratitude to India for offering refuge. "I am deeply grateful to the Indian people for providing me with a safe haven," she said. "The connections between our two countries are broad and deep. We pride ourselves on being India's reliable partner."

While her interviews with the international agencies and the UK newspaper appeared to be somewhat balanced, the ones carried by the Indian outlets are far more incendiary. Sheikh Hasina's lack of self-reproach aside, the latest round of interviews shirks from providing any context that explain Hasina's hasty departure. There is little that sheds light on the weeks of untold violence preceding her flight. There is hardly any mention of Hasina's 17 years of misrule when Bangladesh descended into an autocracy.

Her interviews and the writeup attempts to portray the Yunus-led government as a usurper without any acknowledgement of how the Awami League regime had fuelled discontent among the protesters as well as the general populace. The underlying message has been the next election will not be inclusive without the Awami League, whose activities are currently banned, taking part.

The publication these interviews and column could not have happened without the knowledge or consent of Hasina's host country. Together with the former premier's write-up, this move can only be seen as an attempt to somehow influence the ensuing election. Hasina is still seen as the one responsible for hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries during the July uprising alone. She would do well to remember that such interviews will not even begin to restore Awami League's image. Her hosts would do well to remember that under the current circumstances they should refrain from activities that will further their distance from the people of Bangladesh.—The Daily Star (Bangladesh)/ANN

Chinese Mars orbiter captures rare images of interstellar comet

By Zhao Lei

A CHINESE Martian orbiter has observed and photographed a rare interstellar comet speeding through the solar system, according to the China National Space Administration.

As part of China's ongoing Tianwen 1 Martian exploration mission, the orbiter spotted and captured the images of comet 3I/ATLAS, the third confirmed interstellar object after 1I/'Oumuamua and 2I/Borisov, when it passed near Mars on Oct 3.

At that time, the spacecraft was about 29 million kilometers from the celestial body, achieving one of the closest observations of this rare comet, the CNSA said in a news release on Thursday.

Scientists and engineers in the Tianwen 1 project team started making preparations for the 3I/ATLAS observation in early September. They carried out rounds of calculations and simulations before working out a specific observation and imaging plan, which was based on the 3I/ATLAS' trajectory, brightness, size and the capabilities of the orbiter's scientific payloads, the CNSA said.

The comet was first discovered on July 1 by the NASA-funded Asteroid Terrestrial-impact Last Alert System (ATLAS) survey telescope in Rio Hurtado, Chile. Since the first report, observations made before the discovery were gathered from the archives of three different ATLAS telescopes around the world and California Institute of Technology's Zwicky Transient Facility at the Palomar Observatory in San Diego County, California.

According to scientists, the 3I/ATLAS may have formed around an ancient star at the center of the Milky Way galaxy, with an estimated age of about 3 to 11 billion years, possibly older than the age of the solar system. It is a rare sample for detecting the composition, evolution, and early stellar history of exoplanets and has important scientific significance.—China Daily / ANN

Why are Korean weddings so fast?

By Shin Ji-hye

— Courtesy The Korea Herald

IN KOREA, speed and efficiency define almost every aspect of life, and weddings are no exception.

At most wedding halls in Seoul, ceremonies are scheduled every 60 to 90 minutes, from morning until evening, to accommodate as many couples as possible.

If you arrive early and stay late for your friend's wedding, you might see up to three different brides: your friend, the bride before her and the one after.

But how did weddings — often a once-in-a-lifetime event — become such a streamlined process?

Limited venues & tight schedules

Professor Seol Dong-hoon of Jeonbuk National University said the brevity of nuptials here is an adaptation to Seoul's physical constraints: a densely populated city, with a limited number of venues for weddings.

While wedding venues require ample space and sufficient parking, preferably in easily accessible locations in city centers, they typically operate only on weekends. To remain profitable in such conditions, wedding halls must maximise efficiency.

"If you want a longer ceremony, you often have to pay double," said Professor Seol.

Family & guests before the couple

Lee Eun-hee, honorary professor of consumer studies at Inha University, adds another dimension to the explanation: Weddings in Korea aren't centered on the bride and groom — they're centered on their parents.

"It's not just about two people getting married; it's a union of two families. That's why guests are mostly the parents' acquaintances, their colleagues and distant relatives whom the couple often doesn't even know. Weddings are also a chance for parents to 'recoup' the cash gifts they've given over the years, so the more guests, the better."

Because many guests don't have a close relationship with either the bride or groom, they often show up to give the cash gift and head straight to the banquet hall without watching the ceremony.

As a result, the bride and groom often feel that ending the ceremony quickly is a courtesy to attendees, said Yoo, who now lives in the United States.

More like business deal than love

Professor Lee said that while couples may see their wedding ceremony as a declaration of love and a sacred vow, the reality is that marriage in Korea is often more about formality than love, and that's reflected in the ceremony itself.

"Some young couples try to hold smaller, more customized weddings these days, but many can't because their parents insist on inviting a large number of guests to recoup gift money". —The Korea Herald / ANN

ANN
ASIA NEWS NETWORK
A LEADING REGIONAL ALLIANCE OF 20 NEWS TITLES BASED IN MAJOR CAPITALS OF SOUTH, EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

China's ecological civilisation: beneficial practices & global contributions

For Pakistan, green development and ecological governance shall never be a choice, but a must

By Yang Yundong

OVER the past decade, guided by Xi Jinping Thought, China has prioritised building an ecological civilisation as essential to the sustainable development of the Chinese nation.

Putting people first and upholding that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets", China has balanced robust economic growth with high-level environmental protection, creating a Chinese path to modernisation based on harmony between humanity and nature.

China has advanced pollution prevention and control while enhancing ecosystem diversity, stability, and sustainability. Under the Chinese Communist Party's leadership, the country has significantly improved air and surface water quality and initially curbed soil pollution trends.

Through integrated conservation projects covering mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grasslands, and deserts, China has restored eight million hectares of land, afforested over 6.6 million hectares, and combated desertification across 336,000 km².

It has also established the world's largest national park system, protecting over 80pc of key state-protected wildlife species and habitats. With 34 World Biosphere Reserves — the most in Asia — China continues to strengthen biodiversity conservation. China is accelerating its green and low-carbon transition, steadily advancing toward carbon peak and carbon neutrality.

It is actively developing eco-friendly, smart, and resource-efficient productive forces, while improving supportive policies and standards. Preferential policies include a reduced 15pc corporate income tax rate for pollution prevention enterprises and promoting intelligent, green upgrades in traditional industries such as steel.

These efforts are generating multiplied value through initiatives like 'ecology+' business models, resulting in 78,000 green agricultural products and about 1,600 rural tourism villages. China has built the world's largest renewable energy system, leading globally in installed photo-voltaic and wind capacity for ten consecutive years, with hydropower and biomass also topping the rankings. It also operates the world's largest carbon emissions trading market, covering over 60pc of national carbon emissions.

China actively engages in global environmental and climate governance and has contributed significantly to a cleaner, more beautiful world. As the presidency, China successfully hosted COP15, leading to the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the 14th Ramsar COP, both well received internationally.

It has also fulfilled its Montreal Protocol commitments, accounting for over half of ozone-depleting substances phased out in developing countries. In 2024, China contributed nearly 64pc of the world's new renewable capacity installations. China has helped drive down global average costs of wind and solar power by over 60pc and 80pc, respectively.

By 2035, China's net greenhouse gas emissions are projected to drop by more than 1 billion tonnes from their peak—exceeding the combined reductions of the US and EU in the first five years after their peaks. China continues to advance international climate cooperation, providing and mobilising RMB177 billion to support developing countries.

Pakistan is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. For Pakistan, green development and ecological governance shall never be a choice, but a must. In fact, a series of green and low-carbon cooperation between China and Pakistan has brought positive changes to Pakistan.

For instance, new energy vehicles with Chinese technology are very popular in Pakistan; hydropower, wind power, photovoltaic, and core transmission grid projects constructed by China, such as the Suki Kinari Hydropower Station and Dawood Wind Power Project, have been successively put into operation, continuously providing clean and affordable electricity to local areas.

Moreover, cooperation projects such as the Pakistan Remote Sensing Satellite 01 launched by China in Xichang and the China-Pakistan Earth Science Research Center also help Pakistan enhance its capacity to address climate change. Pursuing a green and inclusive development path has increasingly become an important consensus and integral part of China-Pakistan cooperation.

Recently, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the CPC reviewed and adopted the Recommendations of the Central Committee of the CPC for Formulating the 15th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development.

China will take the 15th Five-Year Plan as an opportunity, upholding the vision of a China-Pakistan community with a shared future and deepening green cooperation with Pakistan under the CPEC 2.0.

Through policy coordination, institutional safeguards, and project support, China will assist Pakistan in enhancing its climate resilience and explore new opportunities for green development, achieving mutual benefits and win-win outcomes.

The writer is consul general of China in Karachi

NEWSMAKERS

DUHOK (Iraq): A displaced man from the Yazidi minority votes during special voting, two days before polls open to the public in a parliamentary election, at the Sharya camp.—Reuters

XUAN CAU DISTRICT (central Vietnam): Fishing vessels piled up in wrecks along the main road after being washed ashore by Typhoon Kalmaegi at Vung Cheo Fishing Village, where hundreds of lobster farms had been washed away or damaged.—Reuters

TEHRAN: A dry water feature collects dust in a Mellat Park, as the Iranian capital faces severe water shortages, amid the worst drought in many decades.—AFP

DEMONSTRATORS wearing masks hold posters during a protest in New Delhi, demanding the government take action to reduce air pollution.—AFP

'I miss breathing': Delhi protesters demand action on pollution

NEW DELHI: Dozens of protesters rallied in New Delhi on Sunday to demand government action on toxic air, as a thick haze containing dangerous microparticles shrouded the Indian capital.

Parents in the crowd brought their children, who wore masks and waved placards, with one reading: "I miss breathing".

New Delhi with its sprawling metropolitan region of 30 million residents is regularly ranked among the world's most polluted capitals.

Acrid smog blankets the skyline each winter, when cooler air traps pollutants close to the ground, creating a deadly mix of emissions from crop burning, factories and heavy traffic.

Levels of PM2.5, cancer-causing microparticles small enough to enter the bloodstream, sometimes rise to as much as 60 times the UN's daily health limits.

"Today I am here just as a mother," said protester Namrata Yadav, who came with her son.

"I am here because I don't want to become a climate refugee." On Sunday, PM2.5 levels around India Gate, the iconic war memorial where protesters had assembled, were more than 13 times the WHO's recommended daily maximum.

"Year after year, it is the same story but there is no solution," said Tanvi Kusum, a lawyer who said she had come because she was "frustrated". "We have to build pressure so that the government at least takes up the issue seriously." Piecemeal government initiatives have failed to make a noticeable impact.

These included partial restrictions on fossil fuel-powered transport and water trucks spraying mist to clear particulate matter from the air.—AFP

CHENGDU (China): Winners from South Korea's T1 e-sports team: (left to right) coach Kim Jeong-gyun, Choi Hyeon-joon (Doran), Mun Hyeon-jun (Oner), Lee Sang-hyeok (Faker), Lee Min-hyeong (Gumayusi) and Ryu Min-seok (Keria) pose with the trophy as they celebrate their victory against South Korea's KT Rolster in the final of the League of Legends World Championship.—AFP

SURABAYA (Indonesia): People take pictures with military vehicles during the Indonesian Marine Fair, marking the 80th anniversary of the Indonesian Marine Corps.—AFP